

## CLARIFYING WHAT VALUES?

C.C. ANDERSON  
*University of Alberta*

### Abstract

Hague's (1977) theory of moral-conflict counselling for use by teachers, parents and counsellors, is criticized because of its excessive vagueness and the presence of thought clichés. Moreover, the authors on whom Hague relies for his information — Kohlberg, Dewey, Erikson — are themselves under siege. Implicit in Hague's theory is the hypothesis that effective counsellors must be at Kohlberg's most principled stages of moral reasoning. An empirical test was made of the extent to which this hypothetical situation could be implemented. From two studies of general samples of Education and Arts students to whom two tests of values and the Eysenck Personality Inventory were administered, it was discovered that the Education students, most of whom are now teachers, were moderately deceitful and had the conventional tastes of the man in the street. It was concluded that, if these findings are representative, teachers will be unable to use Hague's moral-conflict therapy.

### Résumé

En 1977, Hague mit sur pied une théorie relative à la consultation face à un conflit moral. On critique cette théorie utilisée tant par des professeurs que des conseillers et des parents car elle possède beaucoup d'imprécisions et de clichés. D'ailleurs les auteurs d'où Hague recueille ses renseignements — Kohlberg, Dewey, Erikson — sont eux-mêmes mis en question à l'heure actuelle. Au cœur de la théorie de Hague, on retrouve l'hypothèse que les conseillers efficaces sont ceux qui sont parvenus aux niveaux les plus élevés du raisonnement moral. Une expérience empirique fut mise sur pied pour déterminer jusqu'à quel point on pouvait mettre en pratique une telle hypothèse. On a choisi des échantillons parmi des étudiants inscrits à la Faculté des Arts et à la Faculté de Pédagogie. On a administré à ces étudiants le Eysenck Personality Inventory et deux autres mesures de valeurs. Les résultats démontrent que les étudiants en pédagogie, dont la majorité enseigne maintenant, s'avèrent un peu trompeurs et reflètent les goûts du commun du peuple. On conclut que si ces résultats sont représentatifs, on ne doit pas s'attendre à ce que les professeurs puissent utiliser le modèle proposé par Hague.

It would be distressingly easy to dismiss Hague's (1977) "Counselling as a moral conflict" on the ground of its being a collection of stale abstractions into a loose theory bearing little resemblance to reality. Faded metaphors like "growth" and "growthful" are used which were dismissed by Hofstadter (1966, p. 373) in his onslaught on Dewey who was a source of inspiration for Kohlberg (1971) who, in turn, is much favoured by Hague. Again the usual "thought clichés" abound: "autonomy", "authenticity", "creative potential", "true religiosity", and even "Providence." As Barzun (1961) remarks, "The thought cliché is an idea or a phrase contrary to fact which is clung to because it sounds familiar and feeds a half-attentive wish for thought. It is deliberately contrived to spare the reader the effort of learning something new — The thought cliché does more than misinform; it weakens attention, curiosity and the critical sense"

(pp. 51-54). Hague's plethora of clichés disarms opposition by making it seem pedantic.

Sometimes Hague attempts a flight of fancy in which these clichés are so crowded together that they can best be said to constitute an archaic but honourable persuasion. Some practitioners, according to Hague, "can see in some clients an openness and courage to grasp an opportunity, to take up a personal challenge, not to blandly accept what a high pressure society shoves at them but to find their own way, not to be satisfied with the way things are but to find a 'better' way, not to be tyrannized by neurotic 'shoulds' but to positively pursue a growthful 'oughtness' in their lives" (p. 45). These notions, undefined, without examples and unsupported by any evidence can be regarded only as engaging illusions. There can be no reliance for evidence on the "monumental works" of Kohlberg, now heavily besieged (Kurtines & Greif, 1974; Milgram, 1974), or of

Erikson whose pretence that he is a "psychoanalytic scientist" has been exposed (Crews, 1975), even by his former backers (Gutmann, 1974).

Although Hague seems to be in a world of these clichés where factual information is unnecessary, he does, with an uncharacteristic lack of circumspection, make two falsifiable assertions. The first is that "one cannot over-emphasize the importance that teachers (whether they be a parent or a teacher in a classroom or a counsellor) be conscious of what values they themselves hold" (op. cit., p. 43). This invites us to investigate the sort of values held by these teachers-parents-counsellors, a strategy corroborated by another of Hague's assertions: that the effective teacher-parent-counsellor must be aware of the limits of his or her moral reasoning. "No one can give what he hasn't got" (p. 45). Implicit in this is the idea that this adult model must be at Kohlberg's principled levels of moral development — statistically a very rare breed.

Before empirical work on this topic is provided, it is in order to question the usefulness of values as a concept for the understanding, therapeutic or otherwise, of people. First, it is likely that teachers are unaware that their conscious lives have been influenced strongly by the emphases of the media (Ewen, 1976, p. 105). To quote Jacoby (1975): "The endless talk on human relations is utopian; it assumes what is obsolete or yet to be realized: *human* relations. Today these relations are inhuman; they partake more of — things than of people" (p. 104). Again, as MacIntyre (1958) has pointed out, our values are abstract, our problems concrete (wars, urban blight, poverty, inflation and so forth), and we have no way of linking the two. "How does one apply such beliefs as that one ought to alleviate suffering or uphold the dignity of the individual to the concrete problems of nuclear war and free love . . . ?" With sufficient ingenuity you can enlist these beliefs in support of any and every solution to any and every problem. In point of this fact, it is notable that Rokeach (1974) asked his subjects to rank their preferences for only the most abstract values. Cornered within this ranking system, poor people showed preferences that were remarkably similar to those of much richer people. For example, both groups preferred most "A world at peace", "Freedom", "Happiness", "Mature love", "National security" and "Self-respect", and preferred least "A world of beauty", "Pleasure", "Social recognition" and "An exciting life" (p. 60). Equally corralled within the ranking system, even blacks and whites showed similar rankings. Most preferred values for both groups were A world at peace, Freedom, Happiness, "Inner harmony", "Salvation", "Self-respect", "True friendship" and "Wisdom";

least preferred were A world of beauty and Pleasure.

Why should such different groups share the same preferences? Specifically, it makes no sense to report that Americans as a whole dislike Pleasure and An exciting life or that blacks and poor people are very keen on Freedom, defined as "independence, free choice", and happiness ("contentedness") when what they might be expected to desire would be better homes, job security, a cheap and efficient medical service and so forth. However, they were never asked to rank the latter, more concrete values. Accordingly, it is reasonable to presume that the degree of agreement in values between this pair of opposing groups is bogus because of the conceptual and psychometric manipulation.

A third reason why the use of the concept of values should be avoided in any professional study of behaviour is that selection of subjects' values usually has very little connection with actual behaviour. For example, Milgram (1974) demonstrated that most of his subjects, who were delivering apparently severe electric shocks during an experimental enquiry supposedly into the learning of word-pairs, reported previously that they were peace-loving and non-aggressive people. As Milgram concludes, "The force exerted by the moral sense of the individual is less effective than social myth would have use believe. . . . Moral factors can be shunted aside with relative ease by calculated restructuring of the informational and social field" (pp. 6-7). An example of this gap between expressed values and behaviour is the fact that Rokeach's 1968 "hippies" ranked his abstract list of values in a way strikingly similar to his "non-hippies" although the two groups must have behaved in remarkably different ways.

The accuracy of Hague's hypothesis, that "effective counsellors" operate at Kohlberg's most principled stages, is difficult to test directly because it is so abstract that no concrete predictions flow from it. For example, is there any agreement, especially among counsellors of different theoretical persuasions, about the common attributes of "effective counsellors?" Again, the usefulness of Kohlberg's cognitive model of moral development remains to be demonstrated, at best (Kurtines & Greif, op. cit., p. 469). Finally, the accuracy of the hypothesis rests on the as-yet untested assumption that any academically qualified person becomes morally principled as a function of that person's becoming an "effective counsellor" (or vice versa). A more tangible and immediate issue concerns the implementation of Hague's ideas by attempting to discover whether teachers-in-training, the potential counsellors of the future, were at

Kohlberg's most principled stage of moral reasoning.

### METHOD

To find out the sort of values preferred by teachers (the potential counsellors), there was administered to a young group of 55 teachers-in-training a version of Rokeach's test of terminal or end-values, revised to include four concrete valued objects or commodities; a decent home, job security, adequate financial resources, and liquor defined as "an adequate supply of alcohol of all sorts." Twenty-two values had to be ranked and the most peculiar finding was the relatively low ranking (least preferred) given to the concrete values, especially liquor which was ranked 1st by 54 of the 55 subjects. Two hypotheses were adduced to explain this last finding: (a) the students were lying, consciously or unconsciously (unconscious denial); (b) liquor as a commodity was out of place in a context of very abstract values like Inner harmony or Salvation.

Another study was arranged to test the accuracy of these hypotheses. Two additional tests were administered over and above the Rokeach scale; the Form A of the Lie scale of the Eysenck Personality Inventory (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1968) so that the relationship between liquor rankings and performance on the scale, accepted as a reliable and valid measure of "faking good" or "dissimulation" (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1968, p. 20; Eysenck & Eysenck, 1969, p. 114, p.263), could be examined. A later report (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1976, p. 168) that the new Lie scale of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire may measure a trait like conformity and orthodoxy does not deny that it is a Lie scale, merely providing a different psychological account of the reason for the faking good. If, then, the present students were lying (faking good), a significant relationship would be found between the two variables.

The second test consisted of 8 sorts of questions devoted to cultural activities, the items in each of which had to be ranked in order of preference. The questions concerned radio, T.V., movie and reading preferences, behaviour at weekends, and the sorts of beverages preferred at a party. One of the items in the latter question was liquor, now in an appropriate context. If the students preferred liquor significantly above all other beverages, then the second hypothesis about Liquor would be made more plausible.

*Subjects.* The preferences of fourth-year Education undergraduates and a smaller number of their Arts counterparts were measured. Two psychometric problems are obvious. Since only students accessible to the writer through contacts with friends were tested, any marked differences

between the two groups (67 in Education, 47 in Arts) on the values tests could not be ascribed solely to difference in Faculty membership. Second the ranking for liquor was again heavily skewed, the mean and standard deviation for each group being, respectively, 20.5 (5.3) and 18.7 (1.95). On statistical advice, it was decided to treat the ranks as ratings, a tactic lacking in statistical finesse but not biasing the data in favour of the hypotheses. The descriptive statistics for the Lie scale did not differ markedly from those reported by Eysenck & Eysenck, 1968, p. 8); the mean score for the female Education students was 3.91 (SD = 1.89), for the male students 3.67 (SD = 1.42). The correlative figures for the Arts students were 3.61 (SD = 1.51) and 2.74 (SD = 1.65).

### RESULTS

The results were unsurprising. In the case of the Education students, both hypotheses about liquor were verified: the relationship between preference for this commodity and performance on the Lie scale was very significant ( $r = 0.447$ ,  $p < .01$ ); this relationship was slightly less evident in the case of female ( $r = 0.405$ ), and this sex difference disappeared in the preferences of Arts students ( $r = 0.019$ ). Data about drinks preferred at a party are shown below in Table 1.

TABLE 1  
Ranked Preference for Drinks at a Party by Education Students

Drinks	Mean	S.D.
Beer	2.25	1.00
Soft Drinks	3.15	1.08
Wine	2.66	0.89
Liquor	1.92	1.05

The means are significantly heterogeneous with liquor and beer being markedly preferred to soft drinks.

By contrast, in the case of Arts students, the correlations between preference for liquor and the Lie scale was insignificant ( $r = 0.199$ ) and, as Table 2 indicates, there was no marked difference among their preference for drinks at a party.

Second, the revised version of Rokeach's test of values fared badly in discriminating between the two groups; only one item, A World at Peace, was significantly preferred by the Education students, a finding difficult to interpret. Moreover, for both groups, sex differences were not observed in the original ranking of the value-items which were the

TABLE 2

Ranked Preference for Drinks at a Party by Arts Students

Drink	Mean	S.D.
Beer	2.13	1.12
Soft Drinks	2.77	1.04
Wine	2.61	0.94
Liquor	2.49	1.25

TABLE 3

Sex Differences on Cultural Items

Sample	Item	Direction (Males or Females) <sup>r</sup>
Education Students	Watch Hockey	Males -0.566
	Go to a Dance	Females 0.360
	Prefer Musical Movies	Females 0.489
	Prefer Violent Movies	Males -0.371
	Read Chatelaine	Females 0.780
	Read Viva	Males -0.446
	Read Playboy	Males -0.614
	Drink Beer at Party	Males -0.438
	Drink Wine at Party	Females 0.405
Arts Students	Go to a Dance	Females 0.540
	Prefer Musical Movies	Females 0.438
	Prefer Romantic Movies	Females 0.598
	Prefer Movies of Suspense	Males -0.331
	Prefer Violent Movies	Males -0.553
	Prefer Medical Movies	Females 0.469
	Read Chatelaine	Females 0.869
	Read Playboy	Males -0.737
	Drink Beer at a Party	Males -0.355
	Watch "Ombudsman" on TV	Females 0.331
	Read Ann Landers	Females 0.503
	Read Family Section of Paper	Females 0.460
	Read Sports Section of Paper	Males -0.562
	Read TV/Radio Section of Paper	Males -0.314

product of time-consuming and expensive labour on the part of Rokeach and his associates. By contrast, the cultural items thrown together locally, produced many comprehensible sex differences.

The greater amount of reading done by Arts students may be a significant discriminant worthy of future study.

Finally, Education students preferred uninformative and trivial cultural activities: as for T.V. shows, they watched Rhoda, Gunsmoke and The Irish Rovers; among local radio programmes, the one with outstanding appeal featured strident commercial music with occasional, sensational "news spots", and the sections attended to in the only local newspaper were sports, comics, entertainment and front-page news.

By contrast, the Arts students enjoyed more

serious radio and T.V. programmes (The National, The World at Six, As it Happens, Ombudsman), the less uninformative parts of the local newspaper (editorials, letters to the editor), and a magazine like McLean's as against Playboy and Viva. The statistical evidence corroborating these points is given in Table 4.

TABLE 4

Ranked Differences Between Cultural Preferences of Education and Arts and Science graduates.

Item	Mean Ed.	Mean A/S	F	P
Political Movies	7.56	5.59	4.46	.03
Viva	2.98	3.27	4.53	0.03
McLean's	2.25	1.72	9.88	0.002
Liquor	1.92	2.48	6.63	0.01
Rhoda	1.82	2.59	9.52	0.002
Irish Rovers	3.73	4.51	9.26	0.002
Some Honourable Members	5.02	3.78	26.20	0.0002
Gunsmoke	2.83	4.06	13.80	0.0003
As it Happens	2.35	2.04	5.03	.02
Commercial Radio Music	1.34	2.19	23.50	.0005
The World at Six	2.50	1.89	19.69	.0002
Charles Lynch	12.40	9.46	11.55	.009
Editorial	9.97	7.59	5.32	.02
Entertainment	6.34	8.38	5.96	.01
Letters to the Editor	10.04	7.51	5.83	.01

The writer would argue that these differences are consistent with the different training and standards to which the two groups are subjected. The Education students tend to be trained as technicians (how to use audio-visual equipment, how to test children, how to use simple methods of changing behaviour, how to teach reading and so forth), whereas the members of the Arts group are relatively more concerned with readings and the handling of ideas.

## CONCLUSION

The tentative conclusion is that the Education students, most of whom are now teachers because the two studies were carried out in 1975-76, exhibit characteristics and cultural preferences that do not distinguish them from the man in the street. They are moderately deceitful, have conventional tastes and are interested in the cultural trivia which limit their activities to the convenience of the beneficiaries of the economic system. They are, as Ewen has it, "commodity selves." If these findings are representative, then the outlook for Hague's moral-conflict counselling is bleak, although a recent articulation by Borke (1978) of Piaget's concept of reciprocal empathy might be a more useful basis for a new counselling



theory and the possibility is still open for testing that training in counselling, by itself, improves the moral outlook of the person in training.

### References

- Barzun, J. *The house of intellect*. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961.
- Borke, H. Piaget's view of social interaction and the theoretical construct of empathy. In Linda S. Siegel & Charles J. Brainerd (Eds.), *Alternatives to Piaget*. New York: Academic Press, 1978, 29-42.
- Crews, F. American prophet. *The New York Review of Books*, 1975, 22 (10), 9-15.
- Ewen, S. *Captains of consciousness*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976.
- Eysenck, Hans J., & Eysenck, Sybil B.J. *Eysenck personality inventory*. San Diego: Educational and Industrial Testing Service, 1968.
- Eysenck, Hans J., & Eysenck, Sybil B.J. *Personality structure and measurement*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969.
- Eysenck, Hans J., & Eysenck, Sybil B.J. *Psychoticism: A dimension of personality*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976.
- Gutmann, D. Erik Erikson's America. *Commentary*, 1974, 58, 60-64.
- Hofstadter, R. *Anti-intellectualism in American life*. New York: Vintage Books, 1966.
- Hague, W.J. Counselling as a moral conflict — making the disintegration positive. *Canadian Counsellor*, 1977, 12 (1), 41-46.
- Jacoby, R. *Social amnesia*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1975.
- Kohlberg, L. Stages of moral development as a basis for moral education. In C.M. Beck et al. (Eds.), *Moral education: Interdisciplinary approaches*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971, 23-92.
- Kurtines, W., & Greif, Esther B. Development of moral thought: Review and evaluation of Kohlberg's approach. *Psychological Bulletin*, 1974, 81 (8), 453-470.
- MacIntyre, A.C. The irrelevance of the Church of England. *The Listener*, 1958, 62, 1055.
- Milgram, S. *Obedience to authority*. New York: Harper & Row, 1974.
- Rokeach, M. *The nature of human nature*. New York: Harper & Row, 1974.